

REMARKS

Claims 17-23, and 27-32 are pending in the application, claims 1-12, 16, 24 and 26 being canceled herein. Claims 13-15 and 25 were canceled previously. Claims 17, 27-29, and 31 are the only independent claims.

In the last Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claim 24 and 27-32 were allowed. In response, applicant has canceled rejected claims 1-12 and 16 and has amended independent claim 17 to incorporate the limitations of allowed dependent claim 24, which has been canceled. Although the applicant disagrees with the Examiner's reading of the prior art and the application of the prior art to the rejection claims, particularly claim 17, applicant submits the present Amendment in order to expedite prosecution of the application towards issuance of a patent on at least some features of applicant's present invention.

Upon entry of this Amendment, all of the pending claims will be allowable. The claims dependent from amended claim 17 are allowable by virtue of the amendment of claim 17 to incorporate the limitations of dependent claim 24. Claim 17 is equivalent to claim 24 rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim (claim 17) and any intervening claims (none).

Claim Objections

The Examiner objected to claim 3 on account of informalities.

Claim 3 has been canceled herein. Accordingly, the objection to the language of that claim is moot.

Claims 17 and 26 stand objected to due to a lack of clarity with respect to the term "in part".

In response to the objection to claim 17, the objectionable term has been deleted from the claim. Claim 26 has been canceled herein (to avoid duplication of subject matter added to claim 17 from dependent claims 24), so that the objection to claim 26 is moot.

Claims Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-7 and 9-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,606,798 to Kelman in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,280,438 to Eckhouse et al.

This rejection is moot owing the cancellation of claims 1-7 and 9-12 herein.

Claim 8 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,606,798 to Kelman in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,280,438 to Eckhouse et al. as applied to claim 7 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,306,160 to Nidetsky.

This rejection is moot owing the cancellation of claim 8 herein.

Claim 16 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,606,798 to Kelman in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,533,775 to Rizoiu.

This rejection is moot owing the cancellation of claim 16 herein.

Claims 17-19, 22, 23, and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,606,798 to Kelman in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,916,211 to Quon et al.

This rejection is moot owing to the amendment of claim 17 herein to incorporate the limitations of dependent claim 24, which was allowed by the Examiner. Claim 17 is thus allowable, as well as claims 18, 19, 22, and 23, which are all dependent directly or indirectly from claim 17.

Claims 20 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,606,798 to Kelman in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,916,211 to Quon et al. as applied to claim 19 and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,608,978 to Rohr.

Claims 20 and 21 both depend indirectly from allowable claim 17. Accordingly, this rejection of claims 20 and 21 is moot.

The claim amendments, if any, made herein are made without prejudice to applicants' right at this time to pursue additional subject matter in a separate continuation or divisional application at a later date.

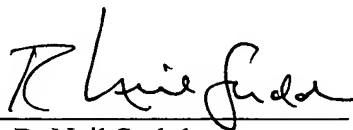
Conclusion

For the foregoing reasons, independent claims 17, 27-29, and 31 as well as the claims dependent therefrom, are deemed to be in condition for allowance. An early Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that direct contact with applicant's attorney would advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number below.

Respectfully submitted,

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